



## **Friends of White Oak Board of Directors**

December 10, 2020

Dear Chair Anderson and Planning Board Members:

Friends of White Oak appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Thrive 2020 Public Hearing Draft (10/5/2020).

Friends of White Oak is a board composed of and representing residents and business owners in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan area. As way of background, we'd like to provide information on the demographics of the Master Plan area (data based in 2014 White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan):

- population 35,655; 14,195 households
- renters account for 36 percent of households (11 percent higher than countywide)
- 43% of the residential units are multifamily, 57% single family
- median household income \$75,400 which is 22% below the countywide median
- 64% of residents non-white (39% African American (compared to 16 percent countywide), 14% Hispanic, 9% Asian)
- 42% speak a language other than English at home

Friends of White Oak supports the overall objectives of the plan and appreciate the plan's recognition of the historic inequities of public resource allocation in Montgomery County, which has shortchanged our area on many fronts. We agree with the statement that future planning decisions must dictate "[p]olicies that specifically support racial equity and social justice includ[ing]...ensuring existing and new communities of color receive an equitable share of services and investments".

We'd like to highlight a couple of specific areas where we feel the recommendations are particularly actionable in support of the objectives of the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan:

-Develop guidance to conduct a racial equity and social justice impact analysis when planning, designing, and budgeting for new community facilities such as libraries, recreation centers,

schools, parks, and public infrastructure to determine whether the new amenity will be accessible to nearby residents of all backgrounds and will reduce any existing inequities in access.


-Ensure that every community has a network of inclusive, safe, and accessible public parks, trails, and other recreational spaces that connect neighborhoods, increase opportunities for social interaction, encourage active lifestyles, and connect residents to nature by “study[ing] the walking and transit accessibility of the existing network of parks and trails, nature centers, and cultural sites to identify opportunities to improve accessibility to parks and trails for all residents.”

Given proximity of the Paint Branch and Northwest Branch to the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, we wholeheartedly support the recommendation for the county to develop an interconnected web of transportation and green corridors focused on pedestrians and bicyclists. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Planning Board, County Council, and County Executive to identify transportation and green corridors in White Oak and develop an action plan to link stream valleys, natural lands, parks, open spaces with trails for walking and biking and to link Paint Branch and Northwest Branch (Action 7.2.2.a and 7.7.7b)).

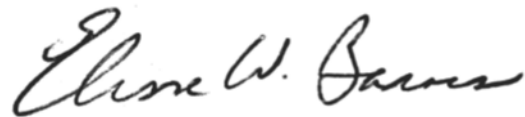
In conclusion, Planning Staff has correctly acknowledged that the current general plan and principally the 1993 amendment, led to the current and longstanding dearth of meaningful development, amenities and progress in the White Oak Master Plan area and other east-county communities. While we applaud the core objectives under the draft plan, the plan should outline the prioritized implementation of these objectives in areas of the county in most need (east-county).

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to further discussions with the Planning Board on these, and other, recommendations in the report.

Sincerely,



David M. Feehan  
FOWO Co-chair



Elisse W. Barnes, JD, PhD  
FOWO Co-chair

**Friends of White Oak Board of Directors**  
**Office of the County Executive 101 Monroe Street Rockville Maryland 20850**